



Issuance Date: June 14, 2012
Questions due date: June 22, 2012, 10 AM, Almaty Time
Closing Date: July 16, 2012
Closing Time: 10 AM, Almaty Time

Subject: Request for Applications No.: RFA-176-12-000010, Western Kazakhstan Community Dialogue Program

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The United States Government (USG), as represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications from local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local for-profit organizations, and/or local colleges and universities to implement a 2 year project entitled "Western Kazakhstan Community Dialogue." The authority for the RFA is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended.

The Recipient will be responsible for ensuring achievement of the program objectives. Please refer to Section I, the "Funding Opportunity Description" for a complete statement of goals and expected results.

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID intends to provide approximately \$290,000 in total USAID funding allocated over the 2 -year period. USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Pursuant to 22 CFR 226.81, it is USAID policy not to award profit under assistance instruments. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the grant program and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (22 CFR 226, OMB Circular A-122 for non-profit organization, OMB Circular A-21 for universities, and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 31 for-profit organizations), may be paid under the agreement when awarded. For local NGOs the Standard Provisions for non-U.S., non-governmental Recipients will apply. Copies of these documents can be accessed via the USAID website: <http://www.usaid.gov>.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered unless the reason for delayed submission is deemed justified or it is in the best interests of the Agency to waive this requirement.

For the purposes of this program, this RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter and the following sections:

SECTION I – FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION.....	3
SECTION II – AWARD INFORMATION.....	10
SECTION III – ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION.....	12
SECTION IV – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION.....	14
SECTION V – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION.....	21
SECTION VI – AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION.....	24
SECTION VII – AGENCY CONTACTS.....	29

For the purposes of this RFA, the term "Grant" is synonymous with "Cooperative Agreement"; "Grantee" is synonymous with "Recipient"; and "Grant Officer" is synonymous with "Agreement Officer".

If you decide to submit an application, it must be received by the closing date and time indicated at the top of this cover letter at the place designated below for receipt of applications. Applicants are requested to submit both technical and cost portions of their applications in separate volumes in electronic format (email). Applications and modifications thereof shall be submitted electronically with the name and address of the applicant and RFA-176-12-000010 inscribed thereon, to: AlmatyAASolicitations@usaid.gov

Award will be made to the responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meet the objectives set forth in this RFA.

If it is determined that the answer to any question(s) is of sufficient importance to warrant notification to all prospective recipients, a Questions and Answer document, and/or if needed, an amendment to the RFA, will be issued.

Therefore, questions should be submitted no later than June 22, 2012, 10 AM, (Almaty Time), to Ms. Ragheda Rabie, Agreement Officer via email at AlmatyAASolicitations@usaid.gov.

If there are problems in downloading the RFA, please contact Ms. Olessya Oliyarnik, Negotiator, via email at OOliyarnik@usaid.gov.

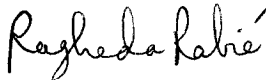
Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. In addition, final award of any resultant grant cannot be made until funds have been fully appropriated, allocated, and committed through internal USAID procedures. While it is anticipated that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for award.

This RFA is being posted through www.grants.gov. This RFA and any future amendments can be downloaded from this website (www.grants.gov). It is the responsibility of the recipient of the application document to ensure that it has been received from www.grants.gov in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

If there are any problems in downloading the RFA, please contact Ms. Olessya Oliyarnik, Negotiator, via email at OOliyarnik@usaid.gov.

Applicants should retain for their records one copy of all enclosures which accompany their application.

Sincerely,



Ragheda Rabie
Agreement Officer

SECTION I – FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. TITLE

Western Kazakhstan Community Dialogue Program

B. PURPOSE

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking application(s) to implement a two year project entitled Western Kazakhstan Community Dialogue.

The overall objective of this program is to strengthen dialogue among communities, local authorities and key private-sector stakeholders in oil-producing parts of Western Kazakhstan. Specifically, the Program will promote constructive dialogue among communities of Western Kazakhstan with local (city, *rayon*, and *oblast*) civil society organizations (CSOs), government officials, and private companies operating in this region.

Depending upon the availability of funding, USAID/CAR estimates a life of project budget of \$290,000 for the 2 year life of this project.

Specifically, USAID CAR will provide assistance towards the following results:

Result 1: *A platform for increased productive dialogue among communities, local CSOs, government authorities and private companies is established.*

Result 2: *Strengthened and developed capacities of local CSOs to advocate for constituents' rights, identify and mitigate potential sources of conflict, and reduce vulnerability and social exclusion of disenfranchised (marginalized) groups in the identified communities.*

Result 3: *Local government officials possess the skills to seek and put to use contributions from civic groups, businesses, and citizens in decision-making processes.*

Result 4: *Increased volume and quality of community participation in designing, implementing and monitoring corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in target communities*

C. BACKGROUND

In the 20 years since independence, Kazakhstan has been a *rara avis* among the former Soviet states — it has managed to steer clear of war and internal strife, built a foundation for religious tolerance and ethnic harmony, and experienced impressive economic growth. Despite the country's economic successes, continued issues in democratic governance have revealed a number of vulnerabilities. Most recently, the January 2012 parliamentary elections were found by international observers and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to have fallen short of democratic standards, and opposition activists and journalists have been subjected to a new wave of security raids and detentions. Other factors impeding good governance in Kazakhstan include corruption (Kazakhstan is ranked 120 of 183 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index), and major inconsistencies in Kazakhstan's legal framework with OSCE and other international commitments. Government authorities, while acknowledging the existence of some governance problems, assert that a long-term, gradual reform process is indeed underway, but simply requires more time.

Tension in the socio-political stratosphere is most pronounced in Kazakhstan's western *oblasts*, which serve as a pillar of the country's profitable oil and gas sector¹. A considerable part of the country's oil output is extracted in Atyrau and Mangistau *oblasts* of Western Kazakhstan, which consequently are home to major foreign and local firms like Chevron, ExxonMobil, Agip KCO, and Kazmunaigaz. Despite Western Kazakhstan's booming economy, local residents in the region continue to suffer from a range of socioeconomic and political problems, including increased crime, rising housing prices, youth unemployment, limited access to justice, ecological degradation and local corruption. Paradoxically, Atyrau and Mangistau *oblasts* have the highest rates of poverty in the country, at close to 12% according to the Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

¹ Oil and gas revenues comprise 15-20% of Kazakhstan's GDP

Against the presence of highly-profitable oil and gas extraction operations, difficult living conditions and social inequality in Western Kazakhstan have begun to incite public tensions. In its worst form, increased agitation in the region is providing an opportunity for extremist messages to ignite opportunistic and radicalized elements of the population. Local government institutions and law enforcement are ill equipped to address these increasingly pronounced social issues. The social development contributions of extractive companies operating in the region are often unseen and unfelt by the local population.

Labor disputes have served as a reliable proxy for socio-political tension in the region for the past decade. Since the late 2000s, both Mangistau *oblast* has experienced several serious labor protests, strikes, and demonstrations involving thousands of workers who demanded better pay in line and improved working conditions (see background below). Strikers' grievances generally include the rising cost of living, lack of adequate transportation and telecommunication infrastructure, and poor quality public services such as education, drinking water and healthcare. Life in the region is made more challenging due to the harsh, dry climate with blistering summers and gusty winters.

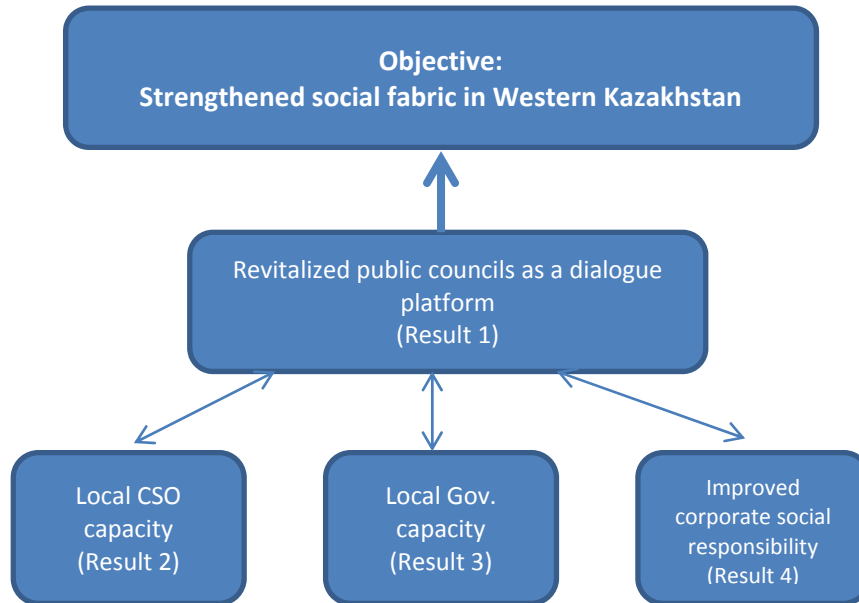
In the most striking recent case, a seven-month long labor dispute in Zhanaozen escalated over time into a broader standoff with political overtones. In the absence of any government efforts at reconciliation, the labor dispute came to a violent end on December 16, 2011. As of this writing, additional labor strikes have broken out in Mangistau oblast, and further afield.

A critical dynamic in Western Kazakhstan is the composition of the population in these oblasts. Overwhelmingly populated by ethnic Kazakhs, Mangistau is mostly inhabited by members of the "Younger Zhuz," a group known for their patriotism, civic activism and history of dissent. Additionally, over the last decade, Western Kazakhstan, and Mangistau oblast in particular have served as the destination for tens of thousands of "oralmans" – ethnic Kazaks mainly from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan encouraged by the Kazakhstani government to return to their ethnic homeland under a program of official government support and subsidies. Despite the relatively high economic growth experienced in Kazakhstan, oralman face considerable challenges as one of the country's most vulnerable groups. One of the major challenges for oralman is unemployment - only 30% of Western Kazakhstan oralman report being fully employed. The high level of unemployment experienced by oralman can be explained by a number of variables such as legal obstacles, low economic integration, differences in education systems, and language barriers.

In the context described above, a comprehensive community-oriented program – making concerted efforts to ease social and economic tensions, prevent further conflict, and promote constructive dialogue in Mangistau oblast – is absolutely crucial. The proposed program approach involves a set of activities aimed at improving government–CSO–private sector (business)–community relationships, empowering each group with the language, tools, and networks to reduce sources of tension and, ultimately, prevent violent conflict. Confidence-building measures to demonstrate good intentions, coordination and collaboration, and local sustainability will be woven throughout all interventions as cross-cutting principles.

D. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND ACTIVITIES

This program supports activities towards four results that will strengthen the social fabric in Western Kazakhstan as a means of building resilience against socio-economic tensions that can lead to conflict. It is expected that work will take place in targeted communities where such tension is especially evident. The implementer, a Kazakhstani NGO or consortium thereof, will identify no fewer than five communities within Mangistau oblast through consultations with local governments and community organizations, ensuring the traction and success of activities to strengthen the dialogue among communities, local authorities, and key private-sector stakeholders in oil-producing parts of Western Kazakhstan.



Result 1: A platform for increased productive dialogue among communities, local CSOs, government authorities and private companies is established.

Activities under this component will focus on strengthening standing mechanisms for resilient and effective dialogue among key stakeholders (communities, civil society, government bodies, and large commercial investors) in Western Kazakhstan's socio-economic milieu by improving the capacity of selected formal councils to channel citizen concerns.

Over the last decade there have been numerous attempts both from government and civil society sides to bring together key stakeholders for intensive dialogue on a range of issues, evident in the sudden increase of formal and informal public councils as intermediary mechanisms between citizens and government. Currently there are three types of formal public councils in Kazakhstan: expert, state, and multi-stakeholder. Expert councils and state public councils, both created at the initiative of and funded by the state, invite some degree of public participation but have raised serious doubts about their independence and legitimacy, thus limiting their ability to serve as a true platform for civil society – government partnership. Additionally, these councils function at the national or *oblast* level, and are thus far removed from the localized concerns of geographically remote and socio-economically marginalized populations.

Various informal neighborhood or community organizations operate at the very grassroots level in an attempt to fill this gap. These groups usually reflect the views and concerns of residents in identified communities on various issues and initiate and sometimes respond to actions and issues which affect social and economic improvement of their neighborhoods. Unfortunately, local authorities fail to cooperate with civil society institutions, reflecting a reluctance to both share power and resources, as well as to take on the additional “work” involved in introducing more participatory forms of decision-making and governance.

Program activities under this component will target public councils at the oblast level, where all important policy decisions are made, paying special attention to strengthening their connections to informal community-level groups, such as the Aksakal councils (informal union of elderly and respected people) and Mothers' Unions that have become very influential in Mangistau oblast. These “revitalized” formal public councils, composed of representatives from state agencies and private companies, *maslikhat* deputies, NGOs and community leaders, will have regular on-site meetings and public hearings in identified communities to inform the public about the councils' work and to encourage

citizen engagement in decision-making. These on-site events will provide a forum for community residents to interact with remote state bodies and officials, as well as with private companies' representatives, providing an outlet for concerns that might otherwise be channeled into social unrest. Additionally, by investing in community institutions, the long-term sustainability of this activity is more viable.

Although Kazakhstani citizens have other legal means (ranging from written entreaties to blog posts to strikes) to communicate their concerns to the state, public councils offer a standing platform for both government and non-governmental representatives to encourage debates, exchange experience, and identify/prevent problems. Additionally, these councils generate significant interest from large oil companies operating in Western Kazakhstan, such as Tengizchevroil and North Caspian Operating Company, which have expressed interest in harmonizing their social policies with local communities. In order to achieve Result #1, the Implementer is encouraged to first evaluate the effectiveness of existing dialogue platforms and identify the best ways of leveraging resources of state agencies, CSOs, private companies, and communities to foster cooperation and collaboration among all interested parties, facilitate exchange of views on socio-economic issues and trends affecting communities and in particular to address important issues faced by local communities.

If the Implementer finds no appropriate dialogue platform, then the Implementer should work with stakeholders to establish an effective mechanism to act in the interest of local communities, such as Community Development Councils, as a platform for government-community-CSO dialogue on various social issues that explores ways to resolve them.

Illustrative Activities:

Identify the most appropriate dialogue platform (cooperation mechanism) to bring together key stakeholders, prioritizing those that can include active community leaders, both men and women, in a formal structure.

- Support the creation of an action plan aimed at increasing the effectiveness of such platforms, such as:
 - Member recruitment
 - Developing key operational documents (Charter, Code of Ethics, Bylaws, etc)
- Organize capacity building trainings for identified dialogue platforms in order to transform it into effectively managed, member driven organizations including both genders.
- Consult and mobilize key stakeholders in order to improve the legal basis and formal authorities of public councils.
- Organize and facilitate regular meetings of "revitalized" formal public councils.
- Coordinate the activities between the formal *oblast*-level public council and informal community initiative groups through organizing regular local-level meetings.
- Organize campaigns to disseminate information about dialogue platforms, and to encourage their use by target communities, and replication in other areas. Public information campaigns should be run in such way that both genders will have an access to information.

Result 2: Strengthened and developed local CSO capacity to advocate for their constituents' rights, identify and mitigate potential sources of conflict, and reduce vulnerability and social exclusion of disfranchised (marginalized) groups in the identified communities.

Activities carried out under this result will support civil society organizations in Mangistau oblast with technical assistance on a variety of advocacy and conflict mitigation issues, including but not limited to conflict mitigation, mediation and third-party facilitation, communications and networking, promoting rights and interests of various social groups and individual citizens, and improving civic awareness. The implementer will create a network of local CSOs competent with the theory and practice of community-based conflict mitigation techniques. In doing so, the implementer will advance cooperation between CSOs and community based initiative groups and community leaders in the oblast including both genders.

Illustrative Activities:

- Establish a sustainable Mangistau CSO network that is able to mitigate/mediate potential conflicts in the identified communities.
- Conduct trainings on participatory peace building and conflict mitigation techniques for CSOs and community leaders involving both men and women.
- Develop participants from problem-solving and /or conflict mitigation training sessions as peer educators for residents of other communities.

- Organize and train CSOs and citizen initiative groups in target communities to identify and prioritize issues of local concern and to articulate them to local authorities.
- Improve CSO sustainability by increasing their knowledge of, and ability to access, government financing mechanisms (for example, state social contracting) and financing from various local businesses.
- Issue small grants to citizen initiative groups from the identified communities that empower citizens to address local issues (environmental, social).
- Support CSOs that provide legal and psychological aid to vulnerable groups such as unemployed youth and repatriates (oralmans) to equip them with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions / resolve legal issues.

Result 3: Local government officials possess and use the skills to seek contributions from civic groups, business, and citizens in decision-making processes.

In his 2008 address to the nation, President Nazarbayev emphasized the necessity of achieving ten major goals, including improving the quality of public services and simplifying administrative procedures. The proposed training activities under this component will seek to strengthen the management and technical skills of local government officials at city, *rayon*, and *oblast* levels, based on international best practices. Training sessions will provide local government officials detailed overview to the basics of government accountability and citizen participation in government processes. Engagement with key governmental and non-governmental bodies engaged in governance reform and accountability issues, ranging from the State Civil Service Agency (which has aggressively pushed a civil service reform agenda) to Nur Otan and other political parties (which have conducted highly-publicized accountability campaigns on local government service delivery) will increase the implementing partner's leverage.

Illustrative Activities:

- Conduct assessments of the training needs of select local government bodies.
- Organize joint trainings for local government representatives, selected Maslikhat deputies², CSOs and community leaders on government accountability and citizen participation in decision making processes. Women operated CSOs as well as men operated CSOs should be involved in these trainings.
- Organize joint trainings for local government representatives, CSOs and community leaders on how to organize public hearings as an effective tool promoting government accountability.
- Develop and disseminate materials on professional management and technical skills for local government officials among interested stakeholders.

Result 4: Increased volume and quality of community participation in designing, implementing and monitoring CSR initiatives in target communities.

Foreign and domestic oil companies, as well as local governments, are increasingly providing critical financial support to community development in Western Kazakhstan. How these funds are used, however, will largely determine whether they ultimately either contribute to stability and development in local communities, or drive conflict.

Driven by a combination of domestic political pressure, international best practices, and evolving corporate culture, companies throughout Kazakhstan are paying more attention to responsible business practices becoming more accountable to their communities, employees, and the environment in which they work. These values are known collectively as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which includes companies' ethics, their environmental performance and how they treat their employees. CSR additionally impacts how companies collaborate with government and local communities.

The activities directed towards this result will promote increased effectiveness of CSR initiatives in partnership with government and civil society, supporting the efforts of local NGOs to serve as a bridge between CSR programs financed by foreign and domestic companies on the one hand, and local communities on the other. Participatory needs assessments facilitated by the implementer will allow local communities themselves to identify key socio-economic investment needs. The implementer will then broker dialogue between these needs and private sector-funded CSR programs, thus bridging the gap between the two, and reducing distrust between local residents and companies operating near their communities. This process will also help to evaluate commercial sector investments in local communities and provide NGO leaders, community leaders and state officials with an opportunity to express their concerns, ideas, recommendations and hopes for future community activities.

² The Implementer is encouraged to identify 2-3 Maslikhat Deputies who have been working actively on different issues affecting identified communities and their residents

Illustrative Activities:

- Facilitate participatory needs assessments or focus groups in the identified communities to identify community needs and set priorities.
- Based on these assessments, develop recommendations for companies operating in these locations as well as for local governments.
- Initiate discussions with all interested parties to present findings of the assessments and disseminate recommendations so that they can use this information in planning of future community programs.
- Train target communities on how to monitor and evaluate government funded community programs and private companies' CSR activities in order to assess their bottom lines and effectiveness.
- Train target communities on how to identify strengths and weaknesses in planning and/or implementation of CSR activities and suggest adjustments so that the effectiveness of these initiatives is improved.

E. LINK TO THE U.S. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

The activities outlined in this document support the Program Objective "Governing Justly and Democratically," as well as the following Program Areas/Elements:

Program Area 2.3 Political Competition and Consensus-Building

Program Element 2.3.1 Consensus-Building Processes

Program Area 2.4 Civil Society

Program Element 2.4.1 Civic Participation

This project contributes to the Central Asia Assistance Review's Priority Strategic Objective for Kazakhstan to "Increase the Capable Influence of Civil Society on Public Policy Decision-Making at the National Level." The program also supports the Mission Resource Request's Objective 3: "Supporting Democratic Institutions and Practices and the White Paper "USAID Central Asia Republics Development Assistance Assessment and Strategic Focus" Development Objective #1: "Enhanced Capacity for Transparent and Inclusive Governance."

F. USAID AND OTHER DONOR RELATED ACTIVITIES

The following describes briefly the activities of other donors in Kazakhstan supporting related objectives and results. Such programming should be considered in the development of applications.

Soros Foundation Kazakhstan (SFK)

The Public Finance Transparency Program began in 2010 as a successor to two other SFK programs: "Kazakhstan Revenue Watch" and "Public Transparency and Accountability." The program aims to improve transparency, accountability and effectiveness throughout the process of the generation and use of incomes from the extractive industries: starting from sub-soil use contract awards and finishing with State budget allocations for programs involving socio-economic development. The program also aimed at facilitating the responsible and transparent management of public finances in the extractive industries for the benefit of present and future generations in Kazakhstan

European Union:

The Public Monitoring Project (12/2010-06/2013), implemented by the Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan, was designed to increase civic participation in policy making in Kazakhstan with a special focus on increasing participation of the population in monitoring the quality of state funded and provided services. This project is implemented in Astana, Kostanai, Pavlodar, Kyzylorda, and Aktau.

Regional SME Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan is a four-year project to promote regional development and diversify the economy of Kazakhstan. The project will contribute to the strengthening of SME regional capabilities through an approach using FDI potential at the regional level. It is implemented in Astana and three pilot regions: Mangistau, East Kazakhstan, and Kyzylorda *oblasts*.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The Zhanaozen Project, implemented by the Charter for Human Rights, was initiated to provide unbiased professional evaluation of the Zhanaozen events to Kazakhstani citizens and the international community. The project mostly

focuses on identifying, assessing and addressing human rights conditions in Zhanaozen and Shetpe. The project pursues efforts to reduce further human rights abuses in situations of internal violence.

The BOTA Foundation

The Conditional Cash Transfers Program seeks to improve the lives of children from impoverished families by increasing their access to health, education and social welfare services through stimulating people in need via cash transfers. It is expected that in 2012 the program will be implemented in Mangistau and Atyrau oblasts.

G. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

a. Gender

Gender is a social construct that refers to relations between and among the sexes, based on their relative roles. It encompasses the economic, political, and socio-cultural attributes, constraints, and opportunities associated with being male or female. Gender is dynamic, and can vary across cultures and over time. For these reasons, gender roles should not be assumed but investigated.

The Applicant will be required to ensure that gender issues are integrated into the various program objectives and activities. To the greatest extent possible, the recipient shall seek to encourage the equal participation of men and women in all aspects of this program. The recipient shall collect, analyze and submit to USAID gender disaggregated data and propose actions that will address any identified gender-related issues.

As part of the recipient's response they should also identify and outline any potential gender issues that might be encountered during the implementation of this program and how these issues will be addressed.

Applicants can find the 2010 Gender Assessment for USAID/Central Asian Republics on the USAID public website at http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/CAR_Gender_Assessment_Mar-2010_508.pdf

b. Persons with Disabilities.

In addition, the Applicants must be aware of USAID policies on reducing barriers to participation for persons with disabilities. As part of its application the implementer is expected to analyze and respond to potential issues that may reduce the participation of persons with disabilities in this program and suggest how program activities will ensure access for persons with disabilities and ways to measure compliance with this requirement. Applicants may want to consult persons with disabilities or organizations representing the disabled community to insure that the program design does not discriminate against nor present barriers that would prevent persons with disabilities from receiving services and participating fully in activities and programs.

SECTION II – AWARD INFORMATION

A. ESTIMATE OF FUNDS AVAILABLE

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID intends to provide approximately \$290,000 in total USAID funding for the life of the activity.

B. NUMBER OF AWARDS CONTEMPLATED

USAID intends to issue one award under this RFA. USAID reserve the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

C. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The anticipated period of performance is 2 years with an estimated start date on/about October 2012 through October 2014.

D. TYPE OF AWARD

USAID intends to award one (1) cooperative agreement as a result of this RFA. USAID/CAR will be substantially involved in the administration of the agreement to help the Recipient achieve the agreement objectives:

a) Approval of the Recipient's Work Plans:

The initial draft Annual Work Plan shall be submitted with the application under this RFA. The draft Work Plan must be finalized no later than 30 days after the award is made. The Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) must provide written comments on the draft Work Plan within three weeks of receipt, and the AOR will provide written approval when the plan is finalized.

Annual Work Plans for subsequent years are due to the AOR no later than 30 days prior to the end of the USG's fiscal year or approximately August 30th. Work plans may be submitted electronically. Upon acceptance of the work plan by the AOR, any substantial revisions to the plan shall require the written approval of the AOR.

The work plan should include a description of the activities to be completed during the year, the expected results, provide quantitative targets for all indicators outlined in the performance monitoring and evaluation plan (PMEP), list of commodities to be procured and key benchmarks to be met throughout the fiscal year and provide a timeline for the implementation of activities. The work plan shall include the detailed budget with a pipeline analysis of costs incurred and projections of costs for the life of the award implementation plan for achieving project outputs.

Regardless of the start date of this award, work plans will be adjusted to the fiscal calendar of October 1-September 30.

b) Approval of Specified Key Personnel: For this program the Applicant should propose Key Personnel positions for USAID approval. All changes to specified Key Personnel will require approval of the Agreement Officer's Representative and the Agreement Officer.

The following personnel have been identified as key for the purposes of this program:

- Project Director
- Capacity Building Advisor
- Grant Manager

c) Approval of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP): Within 30 days of award, the recipient shall finalize the PMEP in conjunction with the AOR. The Work Plan must set forth a comprehensive PMEP that measures impact and progress toward achieving results over the life of the award. The PMEP must include indicators, targets, data sources and collection methods, baseline information, benchmarks and periodic evaluations, and data quality assessment reports. Data collected under the PMP shall be submitted with the annual and final reports. Regardless of the start date of this award, the PMEP will be adjusted to the fiscal calendar of October 1-September 30. As necessary, the PMEP may be updated each year of this award as part of the work plan approval process.

The Recipient shall adhere to the relevant ADS provisions with respect to monitoring and evaluation activities for the design and final program. The designed activity must include indicators against which results will be measured. These indicators are expected to include USG standard indicators and additional indicators as identified by the recipient in their application.

- d) Agency and Recipient Collaboration as follows: USAID and recipient collaboration or joint participation, which includes one or more of the following:
- i. Collaborative involvement of selection of advisory committee members (USAID may also choose to become a member), if applicable;
 - ii. USAID concurrence on the selection of sub-award recipients and/or the substantive technical/ programmatic provisions of sub-awards. Agreement Officer's approval is required in the selection of any sub-award recipients and on the substantive provisions of these subawards.
 - iii. USAID monitoring to permit direction and redirection because of interrelationships with other projects;
 - iv. USAID authority to immediately halt a construction activity, if applicable.
- e) Any involvement that results in a change in the program or approved budget must be approved by the Agreement Officer.

E. FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Pursuant to 22 CFR 226.81, it is USAID policy not to award profit under assistance instruments. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the grant program and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (22 CFR 226, OMB Circular A-122 for non-profit organization, OMB Circular A-21 for universities, and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 31 for-profit organizations), may be paid under the grant.

F. AUTHORIZED GEOGRAPHIC CODE

The authorized geographic codes for procurement of goods and services under this grant are 937, and 110. Code 937 is defined as the United States, the cooperating/recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, and excluding prohibited sources. Code 110 is defined as the United States, the independent states of the former Soviet Union, or developing country, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source. Procurement of Agricultural commodities and related products, motor vehicles and pharmaceuticals is subject to the limitations in 22 CFR 228.19 and will require a waiver.

G. COST-SHARE

Cost-sharing is strongly encouraged under this RFA, but it is not required. Cost share is defined by USAID as "contributions, both cash and in-kind, which are necessary and reasonable to achieve program objectives and which are verifiable from the recipient's records." Cost-sharing will be subject to 22 CFR 226.23 and the standard provision entitled "Cost-Sharing (Matching)" for non U.S. NGOs. It is also understood that local organizations may not have necessary resources for cost sharing. Therefore, USAID will not consider the level of cost sharing into its evaluation and scoring of applications.

H. PROGRAM INCOME

If the successful applicant(s) is/are a non-profit organization, any program income generated under the award(s) will be added to USAID funding (and any cost-sharing that may be provided), and used for program purposes. Pursuant to 22 CFR 226.82 "Program Income", if the successful applicant is a for-profit or commercial organization, any program income generated under the award will be deducted from the U.S. Government share of this award. Program income will be subject to the standard provision entitled "Program Income" for non-U.S. NGOs.

[END OF SECTION II]

SECTION III – ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. APPLICANTS

All qualified local organizations are eligible to apply. USAID will also consider applications which include coalitions or other partnership arrangements among local organizations that draw on each organization's unique skills. Assistance provided under this program is intended to develop and complement rather than to supplant local initiatives and resources.

USAID will not accept applications from individuals. All applicants must be a legally recognized organizational entity under applicable law. The following types of organizations may apply for funding under this RFA:

1. Local NGOs

To be eligible for this program, Local NGO applicant must:

1. Be a local Non-Governmental Organization organized under the laws of the cooperating country or under the laws of a country in the region of the proposed activity;
2. Have its principal place of business in the cooperating country or region;
3. Be managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of the cooperating country or region; and
4. Attach official documentation of their formal legal status as an NGO in the host country or in a country in the region.

2. Local For-Profit Organizations

Local private for-profit organizations may apply for funding under this RFA. Foreign government-owned parastatal organizations from countries that are ineligible for assistance under the FAA or related appropriations acts are ineligible. Potential for-profit applicants should note that, pursuant to 22 CFR 226.81, the payment of fee/profit to the prime recipient under grants and cooperative agreements is prohibited. However, if a prime recipient has a (sub)-contract with a for-profit organization for the acquisition of goods or services (i.e., if a buyer-seller relationship is created), fee/profit for the (sub)-contractor is authorized.

In addition Local private for-profit organizations shall meet the following:

1. Be a local for-profit Organization organized under the laws of the cooperating country or under the laws of a country in the region of the proposed activity;
2. Have its principal place of business in the cooperating country or region;
3. Be managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of the cooperating country or region; and
4. Attach official documentation of their formal legal status as in the host country or in a country in the region.

3. Local Colleges and Universities

Local colleges and universities may apply for funding under this RFA. USG and USAID regulations generally treat colleges and universities as NGOs, rather than governmental organizations; hence, both public and private colleges and universities are eligible.

In addition Local Colleges and Universities shall meet the following:

1. Be a Local Colleges and Universities organized under the laws of the cooperating country or under the laws of a country in the region of the proposed activity;
2. Have its principal place of business in the cooperating country or region;
3. Be managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of the cooperating country or region; and
4. Attach official documentation of their formal legal status in the host country or in a country in the region.

“New” Partners

USAID encourages applications from new partners. However, resultant awards to these organizations may be delayed if USAID must undertake necessary pre-award reviews of these organizations to determine their

“responsibility” as discussed above. These organizations should take this into account and plan their implementation dates and activities accordingly.

Other USG Agencies

USG departments and agencies may not apply for funding under this RFA.

“Responsibility” of Applicant

In order for an award to be made, the Agreement Officer must make an affirmative determination that the applicant is “responsible,” as discussed in ADS 303.3.9. This means that the applicant must possess, or have the ability to obtain, the necessary management and technical competence to conduct the proposed program, and must agree to practice mutually agreed-upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided or funded by USAID. In the absence of an affirmative “responsibility” determination, an award can ordinarily not be made. However, in rare cases, an award can be made with “special award conditions” (i.e., additional non-standard award requirements designed to minimize the risk presented to USAID of making an award to an NGO for which an affirmative determination of “responsibility” cannot be made), but only where it appears likely that the applicant can correct the deficiencies in a reasonable period.

[END OF SECTION III]

SECTION IV – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. POINT OF CONTACT

Any questions concerning this RFA should be submitted in writing to Ms. Ragheda Rabie, Agreement Officer via email at AlmatyAASolicitations@usaid.gov not later than June 22, 2012, 10 AM (Almaty Time). Applicants should retain for their records one copy of all enclosures which accompany their application.

If there are problems in downloading the RFA, please contact Ms. Olessya Oliyarnik, Negotiator, via email at OOliyarnik@usaid.gov.

B. REQUIRED FORMS

All Applicants must submit the application using the SF-424 series, which includes the:

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A, Budget Information - Nonconstruction Programs, and
- SF-424B, Assurances - Nonconstruction Programs

Copies of these forms may be found at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>.

C. PRE-AWARD CERTIFICATIONS, ASSURANCES AND OTHER STATEMENTS OF THE RECIPIENT

In addition to the certifications that are included in the SF 424, local NGOs must provide the following certifications, assurances and other statements. Complete copies of these Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements may be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>.

- a. A signed copy of the certification and disclosure forms for “Restrictions on Lobbying” (see 22 CFR 227);
- b. A signed copy of the “Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers” for covered assistance in covered countries;
- c. A signed copy of the “Certification Regarding Terrorist Funding”;
- d. A signed copy of “Key Individual Certification Narcotics Offenses and Drug Trafficking”
- e. Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants;
- f. All applicants must provide a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number;
- g. A signed copy of Key Individual Certification Narcotics Offenses and Drug Trafficking when applicable;
- h. A signed copy of Participant Certification Narcotics Offenses and Drug Trafficking, when applicable; and

D. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Submit applications to the USAID/CAR Mission according to the instructions below.

1. **Electronic.** Applications and modifications thereof shall be submitted in two separate volumes (electronically): (a) technical and (b) cost applications. Email submissions must include the following in the subject line:
 - a. “Technical application under RFA RFA-176-12-000010, submitted by: [name of Applicant organization].”
 - b. “Cost application under RFA RFA-176-12-000010, submitted by: [name of Applicant organization].”
2. Send emails the following email address: AlmatyAASolicitations@usaid.gov
3. **Fax:** Faxed applications will not be accepted.

All applications received by the deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Applicants are expected to review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this RFA. Failure to do so will be at the applicant's risk.

Each applicant shall provide the information required by this RFA. Applicants shall sign the application and print or type their name on the Cover Page of the technical and cost applications. Erasures or other changes must be initialed by the person signing the application. Applications signed by an agent shall be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purposes, should:

(a) Mark the title page with the following legend:

"This application includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the U.S. Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed - in whole or in part - for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, a grant is awarded to this applicant as a result of - or in connection with - the submission of this data, the U.S. Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting grant. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets; and

(b) Mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following legend:

"Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

The application should be prepared according to the structural format set forth below.

E. TECHNICAL APPLICATION FORMAT

Technical applications must not exceed **25** pages, utilizing Times New Roman 12-font size, single spaced. Cover Page, dividers, table of contents, annexes (e.g. personnel resumes; applicant past performance reports short-form, see Annex 1; certificates; forms; acronym list etc.) will not count toward the page limitation. Any pages that exceed the page limitation will not be furnished to the Evaluation Committee. There is no page limit on attachments or cost application.

The technical application should demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this project. Therefore it should be specific, complete and presented concisely. It should take into account and be arranged in the order of the technical evaluation criteria specified in Section V.

Application Contents: The Technical Application, at a minimum, shall contain the following:

- 1. Cover Page** (does not count toward the page limitation) A single page with the project title and RFA number, the names of the organizations/institutions involved, and the lead or primary Applicant clearly identified. Any proposed sub grantees (or implementing partners) should be listed separately. In addition, the Cover Page should provide a contact person for the prime Applicant, including the individual's name (both typed and his/her signature), title or position with the organization/institution, address, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address. State whether the contact person is the person with authority to bind the organization, and if not, that person should also be listed with contact information. If applicable, the TIN and DUNS numbers of the Applicant shall also be listed on the cover page.
- 2. Table of Contents** (does not count toward the page limitation): Listing all parts of the technical application, with page numbers and attachments.
- 3. Executive Summary (2 pages maximum):** Briefly describe a) the proposed goals, b) the key activities and anticipated results, and c) managerial resources of the Applicant, and how the overall project will be managed.

4. Technical Approach (15 pages maximum):

In this section, applicants are not to merely repeat what is already described in this RFA. Applicants shall describe how they propose to achieve the project result(s) and how the project will make a significant contribution towards achieving the strategic objectives and areas for action identified in the project description. Applicants shall elaborate in their technical approach the most effective way to develop and accomplish the results of this project including the reasonable course of action and tasks that are relevant to the current needs of Kazakhstan. Applicants should present a convincing and compelling articulation of their technical approach.

At a minimum, the approach shall address the following:

- Discussion of the concrete expected results and how they will be achieved, including results and interventions applicants believe should be prioritized and why. Within each of the anticipated results, propose clear, measurable program activities that, if realized, will contribute to achieving each stated result. For each activity, include an explanation of why the stated activities represent the most appropriate response to the problem, opportunity or challenge presented in the background information section. Include a description of the numbers and types of individuals expected to benefit from each activity. Describe how the proposed program will contribute to USAID Mission objectives and sector priorities. Where appropriate, include linkages to the USAID priorities and initiatives listed in Section I of this RFA. Include a brief description of the human, financial, technical and material resources that will be applied to achieve the activities including the roles and responsibilities of the applicant and any partners. If partnerships are proposed, discuss how these will be managed. Discuss alternative methods considered and reasons that the selected approach was chosen over alternative approaches.
- Strategy for the phase-out and sustainability of project activities and impact shall be discussed by describing strategies that will be employed to sustain the activities beyond USAID funding as well as the potential for scaling up to achieve broad-based impact where possible and appropriate; Substantive attention on how applicants will incorporate gender considerations and other cross-cutting themes under the USAID Mission Strategy into the implementation of the program ; Implementation timelines schedule; and
- The application shall also include as an annex, a draft Annual Work Plan for the first year, including a detailed Implementation Schedule for achieving expected program results. The applicant is encouraged to propose innovative implementation mechanisms to reach the desired results and an aggressive but realistic schedule of performance milestones as steps toward achieving proposed results. The implementation plan should clearly outline the links between the proposed results, conceptual approach, and performance milestones, and should include a realistic timeline for achieving semi-annual, annual, and end-of-program results.

5. Key Personnel (3 pages maximum)

Applicants are expected to propose personnel for three key positions: Project Director, Capacity Building Advisor, and Grant Manager. The evaluation will assess the appropriateness of professional backgrounds of the proposed key personnel, their work experience related to the project components, management qualifications, and relevant experience in Western Kazakhstan.

1. **Project Director:** The Project Director will be the primary point of contact with USAID/CAR with regard to day-to-day activity implementation and management matters relating to the Agreement. The Project Director must have overall responsibility for assuring that all assistance provided under the award is technically sound and appropriate for the needs to be addressed and for adequately managing and supervising the work of the project team.
2. **Other Senior Professionals (Capacity Building Advisor, Grant Manager):** Applicants should propose sufficiently qualified and experienced professional staff to technically support project implementation and local office operations throughout the project.

As an annex to this section, applicants shall submit resumes for the 3 key personnel. The resumes must be no more than two pages each and should include at least three professional references with current telephone numbers or email addresses for each reference. Each resume shall be accompanied by a SIGNED letter of commitment from each candidate indicating his/her availability to serve in the stated position on a specific date and for a definitive term of service. Please note that documentation that reflects an exclusive relationship between an individual and an applicant is NOT requested and should NOT be submitted.

4. Management Plan and Organizational Capacity (2 pages maximum):

The Management Plan should provide a summary of the applicant's ability to work in civil society development, conflict mitigation and civic participation programs, especially in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, and preferably in Western Kazakhstan, which demonstrate its understanding and knowledge of relevant issues and potential challenges. The application also must provide evidence of the organization's technical resources, expertise and capabilities for implementing similar programs. The applicant shall propose an organizational arrangement that clearly demonstrates an effective mechanism for managing project resources and working with partners. The organization should describe

its comparative advantage in implementing the proposed activities. Beyond a narrative description, an organizational chart must be provided.

This section shall address the following:

- a) Composition and organizational structure of the proposed project team and a description of key personnel team members' roles, technical expertise, estimated amount of time to be devoted to the activity for each person,
- b) How the structure will ensure effectiveness and efficiency, in order to achieve maximum benefits and results at minimum cost,
- c) Proposed partners, and a clear rationale for the choice and technical capacity of either sub-contractors or technical partner organizations, including a) grant making capacity; b) direct experience in similar programs;
- d) A clear and realistic description of project start-up/mobilization, including when (specific dates) and how key and non-key personnel will be hired and office space secured and fully functional.

5. Past Performance (2 pages maximum):

Applicants must include a complete list of all U.S. Governmental and/or privately funded contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, etc. received in the last three years which the organization, both the primary Applicant as well as any substantive partners, if any, has implemented.

This section shall also briefly address the following:

- a) Brief description of organizational history and experience.
- b) Examples of accomplishments in developing and implementing similar projects.
- c) Relevant experience with proposed approaches.
- d) Institutional strength as represented by breadth and depth of experienced personnel in project relevant disciplines and areas.

Please include the following information in an annex under past performance information using Applicant Past Performance Reports Short-Form, see Annex 1:

- a) Name, address, current telephone number and email address of responsible representative(s) from the organization for which the work was performed;
- b) Contract/grant name and number, if any, annual amount received for each of the last three years and beginning and end dates;
- c) Brief description of the project/assistance activity.

USAID may contact references and use the past performance data, along with other information to determine the applicant's responsibility. The Government reserves the right to obtain information for use in the evaluation of past performance from any and all sources inside or outside the Government.

F. COST APPLICATION FORMAT

The Cost Application shall be submitted under separate cover from the technical application. Certain documents are required to be submitted by an applicant in order for Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility. However, it is USAID policy not to burden applicants with undue reporting requirements if that information is readily available through other sources.

The following sections describe the documentation that applicants for Assistance award must submit to USAID prior to award. While there is no page limit for this portion, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible, but still provide the necessary details.

The cost application must include all direct costs associated with the implementation and completion of activities, as well as any indirect costs and program costs such as those related to any sub-agreements and/or contracts as detailed below. These amounts are subject to revision depending on availability of funds. The application will provide the following detailed information:

1. The Cost Application must submit the SF-424 and SF-424A "Application for Federal Assistance" with each activity identified.
2. The **Detailed Budget** shall be submitted in the Development-Focused Budget format ((DFB) by each proposed activity) and broken-down by years.

Cost information should be summarized in both the SF424A and DFB categories by the corresponding program elements. If an input serves multiple development results and program elements, the applicant must allocate the input across the corresponding results and provide a rationale in the budget narrative for the method used for each allocated input.

The Cost application should include sufficient detail information to evaluate and support your proposed costs. At a minimum, this should include an explanation of the salaries, supplies, travel, other direct costs and indirect cost components of your budget. Please indicate which items, if any, are being cost-shared and their value.

a) Summary Cost Breakdown

Please provide a breakdown, by activity and years, in the following format:

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>USAID</u>	<u>Other Sources</u>	<u>Total</u>
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b) Salaries

Please provide a separate line item for each proposed individual and identify each by name, title and the level of effort and salary rate. Also include position descriptions for all employees and consultants whose compensation will be charged as a direct cost to the agreement. This information will also be required for subrecipients. Also, specify key personnel and all essential personnel under the program and include CVs for all those individuals and salary history.

c) Fringe Benefits

Please provide a breakdown of proposed fringe benefits. This breakdown should include the rate at which the benefit is charged and the base against which it is applied.

d) Travel/Per Diem

Please provide the destination and duration of each trip, the individuals traveling, and a breakdown between the per diem and airfare and the basis for each.

e) Other Direct Cost

Please provide a breakdown and explanation for all other direct costs (ODCs).

3. Budget Notes: The application shall provide budgetary notes for all costs and explain how the costs were derived.

Salary and Wages - Direct salaries and wages should be proposed in accordance with the applicant's personnel policies.

Fringe Benefits - If the applicant has a fringe benefit rate that has been approved by an agency of the Government, such rate should be used and evidence of its approval should be provided. If a fringe benefit rate has not been so approved, the applicant should propose a rate and explain how the rate was determined. If the latter is used, the narrative should include a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., unemployment insurance, workers compensation, health and life insurance, retirement, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in dollars and as a percentage of salaries.

Travel and Transportation - The application should indicate the number of trips, domestic and international, and the estimated costs. Specify the origin and destination for each proposed trip, duration of travel, and number of individuals traveling. Per diem should be based on the applicant's normal travel policies (applicants may choose to refer to the Federal Standardized Travel Regulations for cost estimates).

Other Direct Costs - This includes communications, report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, insurance (other than insurance included in the applicant's fringe benefits),

equipment (procurement plan for commodities), office rent abroad, etc. The narrative should provide a breakdown and support for all and each other direct costs.

Branding and Marking. The cost application must incorporate the estimated cost for Branding and Marking. Additional guidance is available in ADS 320 <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/320.pdf>

Local Institutions usually do not have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) letter with the US Government. Therefore no indirect costs should be included in the cost/business application submitted by local NGOs. Local institutions submitting applications should treat all indirect costs as direct costs.

Seminars and Conferences - The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of proposed conferences and seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs.

4. Pursuant to the requirements set forth in 22 CFR 226, please provide details on cost-sharing contributions that will be leveraged or provided for this program, including the donors, a narrative explanation of the contributions and other information allowing us to evaluate cost-efficiency of the proposed contributions, if any.
5. In the case of a group application, the Cost Application must include a copy of the legal relationship between the prime applicant and its partners. The application document should include a full discussion of the relationship between the applicant and its partners, including identification of the applicant with which USAID will treat for purposes of Agreement administration, identity of the applicant which will have accounting responsibility, how Agreement effort will be allocated and the express Agreement of the principals thereto to be held jointly and severally liable for the acts or omissions of the other.
6. The required Representations and Certifications should be included with the cost proposal. Complete copies of these Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements may be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>.
7. The proposed budget should provide cost estimates for the management of the program (including program monitoring). Applicants should minimize their administrative and support costs for managing the project to maximize the funds available for project activities. Accordingly, those applications with minimal administrative costs may be deemed to offer a "greater value" than those with higher costs for program administration. Additionally, those applications with a greater proportion of cost share may be deemed to offer a "greater value."
8. The cost/business portion of the application should describe headquarters and field procedures for financial reporting. Discuss the management information procedure you will employ to ensure accountability for the use of U.S. Government funds. Describe program budgeting, financial and related program reporting procedures.
9. Please include information on the organization's financial status and management, including:
 - (a) Audited financial statements for the past three years,
 - (b) Organization chart, by-laws, constitution, and articles of incorporation, if applicable,
 - (c) Copy of its personnel (especially regarding salary and wage scales, merit increases, promotions, leave, differentials, etc.), travel accounting management and procurement policies.
10. The application should include information that substantiates that the applicant:
 - (a) Have adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain such resources as required during the performance of the Agreement.
 - (b) Has the ability to comply with the Agreement conditions, taking into account all existing and currently prospective commitments of the applicant, non-governmental and governmental.
 - (c) Has a satisfactory record of performance. In the absence of evidence to the contrary or circumstances properly beyond the control of the applicant, applicants who are or have been deficient in current or recent performance (when the number of grants, contracts, and Cooperative agreements, and the extent of any deficiency of each, are considered) shall be presumed to be unable to meet this requirement. Past unsatisfactory performance will ordinarily be sufficient to justify a determination of

non-responsibility, unless there is clear evidence of subsequent satisfactory performance. The Agreement Officer will collect and evaluate data on past performance of applicants using information from sources provided in accordance with Paragraph 6 above.

- (d) Has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics.
- (e) Is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive a Cooperative Agreement under applicable laws and regulations (e.g., EEO).

Applicants may submit any additional evidence of responsibility considered necessary in order for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility. Please note that a positive responsibility determination is a requirement for award, and all organization shall be subject to a pre-award survey to verify the information provided and substantiate the determination.

- 11. Unnecessarily elaborate applications:** unnecessarily elaborate brochures or other presentations beyond those sufficient to present a complete and effective application in response to this RFA are not desired and may be construed as an indication of the applicant's lack of cost consciousness. Elaborate artwork, expensive paper and bindings, and expensive visual and other presentation aids are neither necessary nor wanted.

[END OF SECTION IV]

SECTION V – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The criteria presented below have been tailored to the requirements of this particular RFA. Applicants should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which applicants should address in their applications and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

Recognizing that various approaches may have merit, this RFA seeks an implementing partner that, on the basis of its experience, can propose cost-effective ways of implementing this program. USAID may reject all applications if they are not deemed sufficiently responsive.

An award will be made based on the ranking according to the evaluation criteria below. Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria set forth below in the relevant order of importance:

- Technical Approach
- Key Personnel
- Management Plan and Organizational Capacity
- Past Performance

1. Technical Approach

1) The degree to which: the proposed approach is technically sound, meets the objectives of the project as described in this solicitation, provides a logical and sequential approach indicating achievable milestones through measurable outputs and outcomes, seeks to maximize results within budgeted resources, proving cost effectiveness and reflecting, realistically, the cost of design, implementation and finalization of project.

2) The degree to which the application can demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of country-specific and regional issues related to community engagement, maintenance of relationships between various stakeholders, advocacy and civil society strengthening. Also, demonstrate overall knowledge and understanding of conflict mitigation, including best practices, lessons learned, proven successful approaches, and international trends and debates.

3) The degree to which the application addresses a longer-term sustainability vision for this project, especially after USAID funding will end.

4) The degree to which the draft Work plan is well-defined and realistic.

2. Key Personnel

The evaluation will assess the appropriateness of professional backgrounds of the proposed key personnel, their work experience related to the project components, management qualifications, and relevant experience.

a) The Project Director should possess the following:

- At least 5 years of experience leading and directing similar donor funded programming.
- Excellent negotiation, conflict prevention and resolution skills and the ability to lead and build consensus, cooperation, and coalitions among individuals with competing interests.
- Technical experience in at least two (however more an advantage) of the following areas: lobbying, advocacy, coalition-building, grant management, media relations, and organizational capacity building.
- Strong leadership, management, and team building skills.
- Proven record of successful partnership with Kazakhstani civil society organizations and government entities.
- A Master's Degree in social or political sciences, public administration, non-profit management or a similar field preferred.
- Advanced English language skills.

b) Capacity Building Advisor should possess the following:

- At least 3 years of proven experience in building and strengthening institutions for delivering high quality services to achieve impact, excellent knowledge of organizational development and capacity building terminology, methodology and best practices.
- Experience working in Western Kazakhstan with an understanding of the current capacity of dialogue platforms in the region preferred.
- Ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Relevant educational qualifications at a graduate degree level (Bachelor's or above).
- Language skills in Kazakh preferred but not required.
- Advanced computer skills, especially advanced use of MS Office.

c) Grant Manager should possess the following:

- At least 3 years of proven experience in financial management and/or project administration, grants and financial systems.
- Technical proficiency with the full lifecycle of the grant-making and reporting process.
- A graduate degree in finance/accounting or business administration from an accredited university
- Solid computer skills in Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel

3. Management Plan and Organizational Capacity

a) The extent to which the overall management plan is adequate, and technically sound for the implementation of the proposed activities, as well as, the extent to which the applicant convincingly demonstrates an effective management approach, in which composition and structure of the project management team adds value to project implementation. The extent to which the applicant's corporate and institutional capability allows to promptly launch and effectively implement the proposed activity. Demonstrated utilization of local expertise and local organizations involved in program implementation.

b) The extent to which the proposed partner organizations demonstrate proven experience in similar democracy and governance programs and in managing activities related to those proposed in the RFA.

c) The extent to which the prime implementer demonstrates its capacity to make and monitor sub-grants.

d) The extent to which the project start-up/mobilization plan is clear, realistic, and includes specific dates.

4. Past Performance

Applicants and any proposed partners will be evaluated in accordance with ADS 303.3.6.3. The Technical Evaluation Committee will validate an applicant's past performance reference information by relying on existing evaluations to the maximum extent possible; and making a reasonable, good faith effort to contact all references to obtain verification or corroboration on the below evaluation criteria:

- How well an applicant performed,
- The relevancy of program work,
- Instances of good performance,
- Instances of poor performance,
- Significant achievements,
- Significant problems, and
- Any indications of excellent or exceptional performance in the most critical areas.

B. COST EVALUATION

The Applicant's cost application will be reviewed for cost reasonableness, allowability and allocability. The cost application will also be reviewed for accuracy and congruity with the activities proposed in the technical application. USAID is looking for innovative applications that clearly articulate how limited USAID funds can be best applied for maximum impact and results.

C. AWARD

Award will be made to the responsible applicant whose application offers the greatest value, cost and other factors considered. The final award decision is made, while considering the recommendations of the TEC, by the Agreement Officer.

The Agreement Officer's decision about the funding of an award is final and not subject to review. Any information that may impact the Agreement Officer's decision shall be directed to the Agreement Officer.

Authority to obligate the Government: the Agreement Officer is the **only** individual who may legally commit the U.S. Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either an Agreement signed by the Agreement Officer or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

[END OF SECTION V]

SECTION VI – AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Notice of Award signed by the Agreement Officer is the authorizing document, which shall be transmitted to the Recipient for countersignature to the authorized agent of the successful organization electronically, to be followed by original copies for execution.

The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Applicants are advised that costs incurred prior to receipt of either a fully executed Agreement (in electronic or print form) or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer are not allowable and therefore are ineligible for reimbursement under the Agreement.

USAID may choose to change the Applicant's proposed award type, Grant or Cooperative Agreement, prior to award.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of the U.S. Government to make any awards, nor does it commit the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Please be advised that only limited funding is currently available.

1. PRE-AWARD SURVEYS

For organizations that are new to working with USAID or for organizations with outstanding audit findings, USAID may perform a pre-award survey to assess the applicant's management and financial capabilities. If notified by USAID that a pre-award survey is necessary, applicants must prepare, in advance, the required information and documents. Please note that a pre-award survey does not commit USAID to make any award.

2. RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

Resulting awards to Local NGOs will be administered in accordance with Chapter 303 of USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS-303), 22 CFR 220 for universities (formerly OMB Circular A-21), 2 CFR 230 for non-profit organizations (formerly OMB Circular A-122), or 48 CFR 31.2 (for for-profit organizations), and Standard Provisions for non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations.

These policies and federal regulations are available at the following web sites:

- ADS-303:
<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>
- 22 CFR 220 (formerly OMB Circular A-21)
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/fedreg/2005/083105_a21.pdf
- 22 CFR 230 (formerly OMB Circular A-122)
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/fedreg/2005/083105_a122.pdf
- OMB Circular A-133 - Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html>
- 48 CFR 31.2:
<http://www.arnet.gov/far/>
- Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations:
<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303mab.doc>

3. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. Financial Reporting

Financial reporting will depend on the payment provisions of the award, which cannot be determined until after the successful applicant(s) is/are selected. Quarterly program performance reports will be due 30 days after each reporting period. The final report will be due not later than 90 days after the expiration of the agreement.

2. Program Reporting

The Recipient shall provide the following reports to the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) and to the Agreement Officer at AlmatyAAReporting@usaid.gov as specified below and the Substantial Involvement provisions.

a) Quarterly/Annual Performance Reports: Pursuant to TBD the Recipient shall submit quarterly performance reports within 30 calendar days after the end of each standard USG fiscal quarter (i.e. October 30, January 30, April 30, July 30) to the AOR. The fourth quarterly report (October 30) shall serve as an annual report summarizing the fiscal year achievements including participant training and indicator data for the fiscal year. Reports may be submitted electronically. Regardless of the start date of the cooperative agreement all reporting will be adjusted to the USG fiscal year calendar.

The report should include the following:

- An analytical description of overall program progress toward results that reflects and synthesizes achievements. This should not be a description of activities but rather a broader analysis that examines the progress in the context of program objectives and expected results.
- A summary of activities conducted. This section should highlight conducted activities, and include a description of progress toward results in relevant trends and clippings of press articles that mention the project.
- Data on all indicators established in the monitoring and evaluation plan for this cooperative agreement. Data should be disaggregated by gender and other historically disenfranchised populations, where relevant. See monitoring and evaluation plan for further guidance on reporting on indicators.
- A comparison of accomplishments to the goals and objectives established for the period.
- Problems encountered, reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate, and how challenges or problems will be overcome during the next reporting period.
- A comparison of actual expenditures with budget estimates, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, and any other pertinent information, as relevant.
- Priorities for programming during the next reporting period including a quarterly list of public events to be organized by the project during the coming three months, including approximate date, location, and audience. Note: The project will coordinate with USAID about all planned events with press participation, press activities, press releases, as well as inclusion of USAID promotional materials for the participants, participation of USAID/USG representatives.
- Reports shall also contain, as an attachment, a summary list of sub-grants and loans (if any) issued during the quarter.
- Reports shall also contain, as an attachment, an indicator data table outlining quarterly indicator achievements. A sample table is provided below:

Indicator	Year 1: 1 st Quarter Results	Year 1: 2 nd Quarter Results	Year 1: 3 rd Quarter Results	Year 1: 4 th Quarter Results	Year 2: 1 st Quarter Results	Year 2: 2 nd Quarter Results	Year 2: 3 rd Quarter Results	Year 2: 4 th Quarter Results

As Part of Quarterly Performance reporting the recipient will address the following:

1. Participant Training Reports. The recipient will collect training data on technical trainings (i.e., conferences and workshops) provided for beneficiaries that were held in the United States, third countries, or in-country under this cooperative agreement. The training data will be entered into TraiNET and submitted to the AOR quarterly no later than 45 days following the end of each fiscal quarter measured from October 1, as relevant. The recipient will follow ADS 252 policy, which provides detailed information regarding visa compliance guidelines, and ADS 253, which provides guidance on how to implement USAID funded training programs.

TraiNet and USAID Sponsored J-1 Visas

All host country nationals being funded fully, partially, directly, or indirectly by USAID must enter the U.S. on a J-1 Visa, regardless of the type or duration of the activity. In order to secure a J-1 visa, each participant must first secure a DS-2019 form (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor J-1 Status). TraiNet is the only means of obtaining a DS-2019 for USAID-funded Exchange Visitors.

USAID/CAR delegates the TraiNet data entry, verification, and reporting responsibilities to its implementing partner who is responsible for data entry (the R1 role) and verification (the R2 role) of all training programs and participants that are funded by USAID. USAID/CAR/SPO is responsible for approval (the R3 role) and the COR/AOR and Program Managers are responsible for working with their implementing partners to obtain the data needed by the R3. USAID/Washington is responsible for submission of the data (the R4 role) to SEVIS. The DS-2019 approval process is as follows:

- Data is entered into TraiNet by the implementing partner's Data Entry Initiator (R1);
- The R1 submits the information to the Visa Compliance System (VCS);
- The designated Verifier (R2) verifies the accuracy of the data in the VCS, uploads documents, and either submits the information to the R3 if all is correct, or rejects the file if there are errors in the data;
- A designated United States citizen in the Central Asia Mission – the Approver (R3) – reviews the electronic versions of documents and either approves or rejects the files (for missing data or other concerns based on review of the files) sending them back to the R1 with comments;
- When the R3 approves a file, the information is electronically transferred to the Responsible Officer (R4) in USAID/Washington who provides the final approval before the information is submitted to the Department of Homeland Security SEVIS database;
- The DS-2019 form is created, printed and mailed to the R3;
- The R3 gives the form to the USAID COR or AOR who provides it to the implementing partner. The implementing partner is responsible for delivering the form to the participant so that he/she can present it to the Consular Officer during their appointment for a J-1 visa at the U.S. Embassy consular section, or designated Consulate. Exchange visitors apply online at the U.S. State Department's website in each respective CAR countries. When asked to enter a "Program Number", applications should enter USAID's Exchange Visitor Program Number **G-2-00263.**"

2. Marking and Branding

As per USAID/CAR's Mission Order on Marking and Branding, the recipient will be requested to provide the following information:

- An updated quarterly list of public events to be organized by the project during the coming three months, including approximate date, location, and audience. The project will coordinate with USAID about all planned events with press participation, press activities, press releases, as well as inclusion of USAID promotional materials for the participants, participation of USAID/USG representatives.
- Two success stories a year for each country where the project is implemented with an accompanying photograph (see item c. for specifications). The success stories will be provided in a Word Document format, using a standard USAID success story template (available at www.usaid.gov/templates.html).
- The fourth quarterly performance report shall also include a CD with a collection of minimum of 20 photographs a year that are illustrative of project's achievements in jpeg format. The photographs will comply with a guidance provided in the USAID Graphic Standards Manual, and be at least 1MB in size each. Each photograph will have a brief explanation about its subject, and identify: the author and his/her organization, person(s) featured in the photograph, and the location where the photograph was taken.
- Clippings of press articles that mention the project.
- At least 2 copies of all public communications materials produced by the project. In addition, the recipient shall submit one electronic and/or one hard copy of all final documents to USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse.

3. Gender Reporting. As part of its regular reports, the recipient shall collect, analyze and submit sex-disaggregated data and propose actions that will address any gender-related challenges that might arise from that data. The recipient shall report any challenges to the AOR who, in turn, shall work with the USAID/CAR Mission's gender specialist to find reasonable solutions.

b) Final Report: The Recipient shall submit the original copy to the Agreement Officer's Representative, one copy to the Agreement Officer, and one copy to USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse, ATTN: Document Acquisitions, 1611 N. Kent Street, Suite 200, Arlington, VA 22209-2111 (or e-mail: docsubmit@dec.cdie.org).

The final report shall be submitted no later than 90 calendar days after the expiration of the award. The final report shall also consolidate activities and analyses of all partners into one document and their activities and progress towards results. The final performance report shall contain the below information, as relevant.

- An executive summary of the accomplishments and results achieved;
- An in-depth analysis of progress and results that synthesizes achievements that contributed towards program objectives. This section shall clearly describe activities, major accomplishments and results achieved, including results for all of the activities under the cooperative agreement;
- Final data, compared to baseline data, for all indicators included in the monitoring and evaluation plan. This section should include disaggregated data by gender, historically disenfranchised groups and other relevant groups identified.

- A summary of problems/obstacles encountered during the implementation, and how those obstacles were addressed and overcome if appropriate;
- Lessons learned, best practices, and other findings, along with recommendations for future programming in this sector.
- A comparison of actual expenditures with budget estimates, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, and any other pertinent information, as relevant.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117 requires that the impact of USAID's activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying out its development programs. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) Parts 201.5.10 g and 204 (<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ADS/204/>), which require that any potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities should be identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities.

In addition, the Applicant must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.

No activity funded under this Agreement will be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE), Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), or Environmental Assessment (EA) duly signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO).

The BEO-approved IEE (Democracy and Conflict Mitigation Office's Amendment #6 to its Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) is included as ANNEX 2.

USAID has determined that project activities including technical assistance, training, analyses, studies and information transfers qualify for a Categorical Exclusion under 22 CFR Part 216.2(c)(2) (no effect on the natural or physical environment) and, therefore, these activities are excluded from an environmental review.

USAID has determined that a Negative Determination with Conditions qualifies for activities, when following normal good practices, engineering methods, and standard instructions will help to avoid potential environmental problems. This includes possible limited procurement of equipment, including electric and electronic equipment (computers, printers, etc.). The proposed action is that the Implementer should provide evidence that equipment is procured from certified retailers; environmental safety and quality certificates conforming with national and/or international standards are available; it's used in an environmentally sound and safe manner, and properly disposed of, when applicable, at the end of its useful life in a manner consistent with best management practices according to USG, European Union or equivalent standards acceptable to USAID.

If new information becomes available which indicates that activities to be funded by the project might have some adverse effects on the environment, an implementer will report to USAID in accordance with requirements outlined in the IEE Amendment #6, specifically they will submit Environmental Review and Assessment Checklists for USAID approval

As part of its initial Work Plan, and all Annual Work Plans thereafter, the recipient, in collaboration with the AOR and Mission Environmental Officer shall review all ongoing and planned activities under this CA to determine if they are within the scope of the approved IEE Amendment #6. If the recipient plans any new activities outside the scope of the approved IEE, it shall prepare an amendment to the documentation for USAID review and approval. No such new activities shall be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments. Respondents to the RFA should include as part of their proposal their commitment to achieving environmental compliance and management.

5. MARKING AND BRANDING

All USAID-funded foreign assistance (including programs, projects, activities, public communications, or commodities) must be communicated, promoted, and marked as coming from the American people through USAID. Specific communications and promotion measures shall be described in the "Branding Strategy" and "Branding

Implementation Plan,” and specific marking will be described in the “Marking Plan” for the this award. Branding and marking under this award shall comply with the USAID Automated Directive System Chapter 320 Branding and Marking (ADS320).

ADS 320 requires that, after the evaluation of the applications, the USAID Agreement Officer will request the Apparently Successful Applicant to submit a Branding Strategy that describes how the program, project, or activity is named and positioned, how it is promoted and communicated to beneficiaries and cooperating country citizens, and identifies all donors and explains how they will be acknowledged. USAID will not competitively evaluate the proposed Branding Strategy. ADS 320 may be found at the following website:

[http://iapp1.usaid.gov/notices/LoadAttachmentFileName.cfm?Attachment=3626;](http://iapp1.usaid.gov/notices/LoadAttachmentFileName.cfm?Attachment=3626)

In preparation of the branding implementation plan and the marking plan, the Applicant should request from the Agreement Officer the templates for these documents. Additional guidance is available at <http://www.usaid.gov/branding>. The cost application must incorporate the estimated cost of the proposed Branding Implementation and Marking Plans.

[END OF SECTION VI]

SECTION VII – AGENCY CONTACTS

Any questions concerning this RFA should be submitted in writing to Ms. Ragheda Rabie, Agreement Officer via email at AlmatyAASolicitations@usaid.gov *not later than* June 22, 2012, 10 AM, Almaty Time. Applicants should retain for their records one copy of all enclosures which accompany their application.

If there are problems in downloading the RFA, please contact Ms. Olessya Oliyarnik, Negotiator, via email at OOliyarnik@usaid.gov.

[END OF SECTION VII]

Annex 1. APPLICANT PERFORMANCE REPORT SHORT FORM

APPLICANT PERFORMANCE REPORT - SHORT FORM
PART I: Applicant Information (to be completed by Prime)
1. Name of Awarding Entity:
2. Award Number:
3. Award Type:
4. Award Value (TEC): (if subaward, subaward value)
5. Problems: (if problems encountered on this award, explain corrective action taken)
6. Contacts: (Name, Telephone Number and E-mail address)
6a. Agreement officer:
6b. Technical Officer (COR):
6c. Other:
7. Recipient/Contractor(Applicant):
9. Information Provided in Response to RFA No. :
PART II: Performance Assessment (to be completed by Agency)
1. Quality of product or service, including consistency in meeting goals and targets, and cooperation and effectiveness of the Prime in fixing problems. Comment:
2. Cost control, including forecasting costs as well as accuracy in financial reporting. Comment:
3. Timeliness of performance, including adherence to award schedules and other time-sensitive project conditions, and effectiveness of home and field office management to make prompt decisions and ensure efficient operation of tasks. Comment:
4. Customer satisfaction, including satisfactory business relationship to clients, initiation and management of several complex activities simultaneously, coordination among subawardee and developing country partners, prompt and satisfactory correction of problems, and cooperative attitude in fixing problems. Comment:
5. Effectiveness of key personnel including: effectiveness and appropriateness of personnel for the job; and prompt and satisfactory changes in personnel when problems with clients were identified. Comment:

[Note: The actual dollar amount of subawards, if any, (awarded to the Prime) must be listed in Block 4 instead of the Total Estimated Cost (TEC) of the overall award. In addition, a Prime may submit attachments to this past performance table if the spaces provided are inadequate; the evaluation factor(s) must be listed on any attachments.]

ANNEX 2 - Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) – Amendment #6)

(See enclosed as a separate file)

[END OF RFA-176-12-000010]